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SYLLABUS FOR HIGH SCHOOL SPANISH

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The committee,¹ appointed three years ago to draw up a standard four year syllabus for high school Spanish has had the advantage of working upon the syllabi prepared by the College Entrance Board and the Association of Romanic Language Teachers of California, the New York Minima, the National Education Association Minima, the Report of the Committee on First Year Course in College Spanish appointed by the Central Division of the Modern Language Association, the Report of the Committee of Five on a Course of Study in Spanish appointed by the Modern Language Association, and the Report of the Interlocking Committee on the Coördination of Language Study for the High Schools of Illinois, appointed by the Annual High School Conference of the University of Illinois.

By a careful comparison of those of the reports that contained specific recommendations concerning the amount of work to be done, we find some very interesting results, among others a remarkable approximation to identity, as will be seen from a brief statement of the reading requirements for the first year: College Entrance Board—100 pages; New York Minima—65 pages (with most classes reported as actually covering 100 pages); National Education Association Minima as proposed by Professor Hatheway—100 pages; Association of Romanic Language Teachers of California—75 to 125 pages.

In working up any syllabus the prime essential is naturally a statement of the aim that is to be had in mind in carrying out the

¹ Appointed at the annual meeting of the Association of Modern Language Teachers of the Central West and South, 1917. A preliminary report was discussed in the annual meeting of 1918. The report is printed in this form in order that Spanish teachers may have it for a study, with a view to a full discussion in the next annual meeting.

program. Mr. Wilkins of New York recently made the following statement:

"The aim in the teaching of Spanish is to effect that thorough mental discipline imparted by a study of grammar, idiom and syntax and so to develop that ready and accurate facility of ear, tongue and eye that, all combined, will make the present and future use of the language, and progress therein, both possible and certain. We cannot in two, three, or even four years assure a student a complete mastery of the language. But we can and should so train him that he may apply his knowledge of Spanish to any one or to several ends with the self-confidence (conscious or unconscious) that he can easily grow up to any demands that may be made upon his knowledge of the language."

This is good as far as it goes, but there is at least one thing that should be added. In the judgment of your committee the teacher should be able, even in a first year course in high school, to instill into the student some notion of and appreciation for the spirit and culture of the people whose language is being studied.

In these days when methodology has assumed such a prominent place in the educational world that some Teachers' Colleges have actually found themselves obliged to insist that students who take a course in methods of teaching this, that or the other subject should also be obliged to take a content-course on that same subject, it will naturally be expected that your committee will have something to say on the subject of method. Many would have us believe that the grammar method is hopelessly out of date; the natural method so called (than which there never was anything more unnatural) has had its ardent adherents and still has them; and at the present moment the reform method or the direct method seems to be gaining the upper hand. Your committee cannot help feeling that the method that will ultimately be adopted by most of our best teachers will contain the best element in each of these systems and will reject all the rest. We believe, too, that in brief space the ideal method has nowhere been better expressed than in the instructions issued to modern language teachers by the Minister of Public Instruction in Austria, to wit:

"The teacher of modern languages should bear in mind that he must use the language which is the subject of study

as much as possible, and the language of his pupils as much as is necessary; but he should never forget that he must at all times be intelligible to all the pupils."

This doctrine applied to our work in Spanish will prevent our attempting too much in our first year course; and (just at this point) your committee feels moved to suggest that even if at the end of a second year we fail to attain speaking ability, our work is well worth while, since all our other objects can be attained if our pupils acquire an easy and accurate reading ability, for this latter ability makes possible an intimate communion with the great minds of the country whose language is being studied. Most of us are familiar with cases of individuals who have never had the privileges of foreign travel and who speak but indifferently, or indeed not at all, any foreign language, but whose knowledge of the literature, history, art, and general culture of several foreign peoples is a constant joy to all of their friends, as well as to themselves.

For pronunciation we recommend that Castilian be taught. The arguments for and against Castilian have been rehearsed time and again. The best recent summary thereof was published by Professor McKenzie² as the result of a questionnaire sent to some of the leading teachers of Spanish in positions scattered all over the country. Your committee's recommendation in favor of Castilian is in line with the practice as well as the theory of the vast majority of those who answered the questionnaire.

Your committee agrees with the conviction of some of our best teachers (as for example the declaration of the Association of Romanic Language Teachers of California, reaffirmed in the second edition of their pamphlet) that whatever method be adopted, training in the principles of grammar must form the backbone of the work in all beginning classes.

While learning to read simple prose with a good pronunciation the pupil must also acquire the habit of translating into good idiomatic English any text he may be reading. There is much to be said in favor of the Latin professor who insisted that the proper translation of

" . . . ponto nox incubat atra,"
is *not* "Black night lies over the waters," but rather "Night lies over the waters, black."

² See MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, II, p. 21.

For the grammar work there are in particular two methods covering the ground that should be covered in the first two years' work. One may adopt a grammar large enough to occupy the entire two years in going over the ground once. This method your committee does not favor. The other method is to adopt a grammar which will give a skeleton of the entire field in one year. The second year may then be devoted to a review of the grammar thus previously done, with greater stressing of detail.

There are two ways in which this latter plan may be carried out. The first is to take a grammar built on the lines of Edgren's French Grammar. In this book the part called Part I gives a skeleton of grammar that may be comfortably worked through in one year. In this part no mutilated paradigms are taught, but a complete outline of the grammar is presented. Then in Part II, so called, that same field is reworked with added details. The other method would be to take a short grammar presenting just material enough for one year's work and then use in the second year some good elementary composition book built systematically to enforce a review of grammar while giving some of the more important details that have formerly been omitted. The student will thus have covered in two years all of the regular and auxiliary verbs, and most of the more commonly used irregular verbs, including all the verbs of motion; the gender and formation of the plural of nouns; the agreement, formation of plural and position of adjectives; the entire paradigm of personal pronouns; the possessive pronouns (stressing adjectival and pronominal uses); the demonstrative pronouns (stressing adjectival and pronominal uses); relative pronouns; adverbs; negatives and numerals.

The committee especially recommends that in both verbs and pronouns the second person intimate forms both singular and plural be taught systematically in their proper places. Even though the teacher do not care to drill the pupils on these forms in the composition work, they should become part of the student's mental picture of the paradigms in question since he will so frequently meet them in almost any reading that he undertakes.

The study of syntax, as distinct from morphology, should be left for the third year's work; whereas the grammar work of the fourth year should consist of a careful review of the principles of syntax with copious practice in advanced composition and conversation.

FIRST YEAR COURSE

Your committee recommends from the very beginning the use of the direct method concerning things in the class room and in ordinary life outside the class room and the teaching in the same way of abstract words of very general use.

Pronunciation.

Your committee does not recommend much use of phonetic symbols in the teaching of pronunciation at this stage of the work. The teacher, of course, should be familiar with the most recent publications along those lines and should be able to explain in simple language the physiological formation of the sounds so that the pupil will be able to place the organs of speech in the proper position and not be obliged to rely entirely upon an accidental ability to reproduce a sound more or less imperfectly caught. As said before, the Castilian is preferable to any other pronunciation and no slovenly work should be tolerated at any stage of the student's development. One of the best helps in pronunciation is the memorization of short stories or short poems. When the pupil has a few of these in memory he will have standards of pronunciation that he will turn to subconsciously when in doubt.

GRAMMAR

Verbs.

The three auxiliary verbs, *ser*, *estar*, and *haber*; a few irregular verbs such as, *tener*, *poner*, *hacer*, *decir*, *ir*, *morir*, *ver*, *volver*, *traer*, *dar*, *querer*, *saber*, *pedir*, *servir*, *dormir*, *sentir*, *perder*, *pensar*, *poder*, and *jugar*.

The teacher should avoid making the difference between "*ser*" and "*estar*" too scientific at the beginning. Pass lightly at first, making the student feel the difference by means of pictures or funny remarks. For instance: if a student says, "*Soy sentado*," the teacher might answer, "*Ud. es sentado. Muy bien. Entonces le diré: Buenos días, señor Sentado.*" Then go back to it and explain the reason for the use of "*ser*" and "*estar*" in the reading.

All verbs taught in the first year should be taught in the present indicative, past absolute, past indefinite, future, imperfect indicative, and the present subjunctive as used for imperative. Special attention should be paid to the various uses of the imperfect indicative.

How to use the grammar.

Very slowly in the beginning. The committee's experience is that in order to obtain the best results not more than one lesson of the average grammar now on the market should be gone over in one week and this practice should be continued for at least six weeks. The progress will be more rapid after the first six weeks or two months and the entire morphology as outlined in our preliminary statement should be covered in skeletonized form during the first year.

How to use the reader.

Begin the reader the last of the second month. Read the piece to the class in Spanish. It will do no harm for the teacher to translate the entire passage to the class, either before or after reading it in Spanish. In any case the student should then be required to read it carefully in the original while the teacher constantly corrects pronunciation, attention being given not only to the correct pronunciation of the individual word but also to the correct pronunciation of the breath group. The piece will then be given to the class to study and will be the basis for:

(a) Conversation (by means of questions and answers in Spanish).

(b) Dictation.

(c) Composition-reproduction at the board.

By composition-reproduction the committee means that students are sent to the board and sentences in English based on the piece studied and read are given offhand for them to reproduce in Spanish, the class being called upon to correct the mistakes.

Dictation.

The great importance of dictation in teaching Spanish can not be too much emphasized. It should begin as soon as the reader is taken up and should deal with the lessons in the reader and the points of grammar studied previously. The sentences should be very clear and not too long at the beginning. At the outset five or six sentences will be enough, the number being increased later to ten or twelve. The following method of dictation has proven very successful:

"I dictate the sentences to the class. Then I send a few students to the board and have them write their sentences (each student writing one) as they have them written on their papers. The sentences are then corrected and the students have to bring me, the next day, a clear copy of the correct sentences. The next day I collect these copies and send to the board as many pupils as there are sentences. I dictate to each one the English of the sentence and he has to translate it into Spanish. I instruct the students to study their dictation and prepare themselves for the reproduction of the Spanish sentence in this way: They are to translate each Spanish sentence into good idiomatic English, then to put away their Spanish and reproduce them from their own translation in English and then compare *their* Spanish with the Spanish text dictated. This gives excellent results, and in order to prevent those pupils who might not be inclined to work from relying upon help between lessons, I have the studying of the dictation as described above done under my supervision in the class room.

"All the above may seem lengthy but it has, in my judgment, a great deal of importance as I don't use any composition book in the first year. It will be all the more important and productive of good results for those teachers who use a text book having no composition in it."

SECOND YEAR

Grammar.

Review rapidly the grammar of the first year before taking up the new work of the second year by whichever of the two ways previously mentioned the teacher may choose to proceed. Special stress should be put on the place of the object pronouns: their usual place in the ordinary sentences and their place after the infinitive, the present participle, and the affirmative imperative. Also stress the reflexive verbs with which the students have already become acquainted in the reading. Additional irregular verbs must be taught. The forms of the subjunctive will be taught but the regular and exhaustive drill in their use will be reserved, for the beginning of the third year. The teacher should endeavor first to give the pupil a feeling for the subjunctive, showing its use in subordinate clauses and driving that home with repeated

drill at the board of easy, clear sentences illustrating the use of the subjunctive in the present and the perfect tenses.

The same recommendations for the use of the grammar, reader and dictation are made for the second year as are made for the first year. One cannot stress too much the necessity of a thorough review of the work of the first year before beginning the new work of the second year.

Reading.

The reading for the second year should consist of about 150 pages.

THIRD YEAR

Grammar.

Whichever may have been the grammar method used by the teacher in covering the work of the first two years (we refer in particular to the two methods suggested in the beginning of this report), this third year should be devoted to a careful and painstaking study of the principles of syntax. Of course, at the outset a rapid review of morphology will be necessary to freshen the students' memory along those lines. In order that they may get the systematic exposition of syntax that becomes necessary at this point of the work, great care should be taken in the selection of the grammar to be used. It should contain the kind of exposition of the principles of Spanish syntax that is to be found for French syntax in that part of Edgren's French Grammar which is specifically called syntax and extends from page 110 to 295. Your committee does not recommend a set of exercises such as those contained in the aforesaid Edgren's Grammar. Such exercises are hopelessly out of date; but the exposition of syntax contained in pages 110 to 249 is very systematic with copious examples and good reference lists for the regimen of verbs. Some such exposition as this should be present in any Spanish grammar adopted for third year work.

Each lesson in the exposition of syntax should be presented by the teacher before the students work on it at home.

The work of composition-reproduction of the reading matter in the class room, by means of drill at the board and through the study and reproduction of dictation as described in the work of the first and second years, should be continued throughout the entire third year.

Reading.

Some easy Spanish plays may be used for outside reading or for memorization and actually played in the class room, the parts being distributed so as to enable each pupil to recite. This will be found a pleasant and useful drill.

The reading for the third year should be not less than 250 pages, 200 of which may be assigned for class work and 50 for outside reading and report.

FOURTH YEAR

Grammar.

The grammar used in the third year for the exposition of syntactical principles should be the reference book of the fourth year and the practice in composition should be given the student by means of a very carefully graded advanced composition and conversation book. There should be extensive practice in the making of abstracts of the reading done both in class and out and in the reproduction in Spanish prose of certain passages of poetry that may have been read. The pupils will sometimes find it interesting to put into Spanish the introductory material that some editors supply at the beginning of their text books.

Pronunciation.

Of course pronunciation should not have been neglected at any stage of the work and during this year the pupils ought to be able to put what one might almost call the finishing touches on their ability to read intelligently the original.

Reading.

In the fourth year the reading should be not less than 400 pages. Of this 400 pages, 225 may very well be done in class and the remaining 175 may then be given for outside reading and report. As every pupil in fourth year work ought to possess a good dictionary, the choice of texts is less limited than it would be for the work of previous years.

Your committee has, with deliberate intent, not recommended any specific book for any stage of the work since such a thing could not be done without immediately favoring one or another

of the various publishing houses who are trying earnestly to serve our needs. Of course, in the matter of texts for reading we could have listed a series of books of approved difficulty because it would not have been necessary to choose a particular edition, but with grammars and composition books such a thing would be impossible. If the teachers of the Association wish the committee to draw up a graded list of texts we are prepared to do so. For the grammars and composition books, the only equitable way to proceed would be to mention all those available for a given grade of work.